

We claim:

1 1. A method of conducting a customer affinity program auction,
2 comprising:

3 receiving a bid of reward points from a customer for
4 merchandise being offered in the auction.

1 2. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
receiving registration information from the customer.

3 3. The method of claim 2, wherein the customer registration
information includes payment information.

4 4. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
providing a preview of the merchandise being offered
in the auction.

1 5. The method of claim 1, further comprising
2 authenticating the customer; and
3 allowing the customer to access a reward points
4 balance.

1 6. The method of claim 5 further comprising
2 allowing the customer to purchase additional reward
3 points for use in the auction.

1 7. The method of claim 6, wherein the customer is allowed to
2 purchase a specific number of reward points at an exchange rate.

1 8. The method of claim 7 further comprising determining a cost
2 for the reward points purchased and transmitting a request for
3 payment for the cost of the reward points.

1 9. The method of claim 6, further comprising allowing a
2 purchase of reward points on a floating basis.

10. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
deducting reward points expended in the auction from a
reward points balance.

11. The method of claim 9, further comprising:
determining a cost for purchasing reward points
expended in the auction in excess of the customer's reward
points balance and transmitting a request for payment for the
cost of the reward points.

1 12. A customer affinity program auction system, comprising:
2 a central controller constructed to receive a bid of
3 reward points from a customer for merchandise being offered in
4 the auction.

1 13. The system of claim 12, further comprising:

2 the central controller is constructed to receive
3 registration information from the customer.

1 14. The system of claim 13, wherein the customer registration
2 information received by the central controller includes payment
3 information.

15. The system of claim 12, further comprising:

the central controller is constructed to provide a
preview of the merchandise being offered in the auction.

16. The system of claim 12, further comprising

the central controller is constructed to authenticate
the customer and allow the customer to access a reward points
4 balance.

1 17. The system of claim 16 further comprising

2 the central controller is constructed to allow the
3 customer to purchase additional reward points for use in the
4 auction.

18. The system of claim 17, wherein the central controller is constructed to allow the customer to purchase a specific number of reward points at an exchange rate.

19. The system of claim 18 further comprising the central controller is constructed to determine a cost for the reward points purchased and transmits a request for payment for the cost of the reward points.

20. The system of claim 17, wherein the central controller is constructed to allow the customer to purchase reward points on a floating basis.

21. The system of claim 12, further comprising:

the central controller is constructed to deduct reward points expended in the auction from a reward points balance.

22. The system of claim 20, further comprising:

the central controller is constructed to determining a cost for purchasing reward points expended in the auction in excess of the customer's reward points balance and transmitting a request for payment for the cost of the reward points.

1 23. Computer executable code stored on a computer readable
2 medium for conducting a customer affinity program auction,
3 comprising:

4 a module to receive a bid of reward points from a
5 customer for merchandise being offered in the auction.

1 24. The computer executable code of claim 23, further
comprising:

a module to receive registration information from the
customer.

25. The computer executable code of claim 24, wherein the
customer registration information includes payment information.

26. The computer executable code of claim 23, further
comprising:

a module to provide a preview of merchandise being
offered in the auction.

1 27. The computer executable code of claim 23, further
2 comprising

3 a module to authenticate the customer; and
4 a module to allow the customer to access a reward
5 points balance.

1 28. The computer executable code of claim 27 further comprising
2 a module to allow the customer to purchase additional
3 reward points for use in the auction.

4 29. The computer executable code of claim 28, wherein the
5 customer is allowed to purchase a specific number of reward
6 points at an exchange rate.

7 30. The computer executable code of claim 29 further comprising
8 a module to determine a cost for the reward points purchased and
9 a module to transmit a request for payment for the cost of the
10 reward points.

1 31. The computer executable code of claim 28, further
2 comprising allowing a purchase of reward points on a floating
3 basis.

1 32. The computer executable code of claim 23, further
2 comprising:

3 a module to deduct reward points expended in the
4 auction from a reward points balance.

1 33. The computer executable code of claim 31, further
2 comprising:

3 a module to determine a cost for purchasing reward
4 points expended in the auction in excess of the customer's
5 reward points balance and a module to transmit a request for
6 payment for the cost of the reward points.

1 34. A method of conducting a customer affinity program auction
2 comprising:

3 determining a minimum opening bid price by applying an
4 auction pricing discount factor in reward points based on the
5 merchandise being auctioned and the time period of the auction.

1 35. The method of claim 34, further comprising:

2 determining a bid increment.

1 36. A customer affinity program auction system comprising:
2 a central controller constructed to determining a
3 minimum opening bid price by applying an auction pricing
4 discount factor in reward points based on the merchandise being
5 auctioned and the time period of the auction.

1 37. The system of claim 36, further comprising:
the central controller is constructed to determine a
bid increment.

38. Computer executable code stored on a computer readable
medium for conducting a customer affinity program auction,
comprising:

a module to determine a minimum opening bid price by
5 applying an auction pricing discount factor in reward points
6 based on the merchandise being auctioned and the time period of
7 the auction.

1 39. The computer executable code of claim 38, further
2 comprising:

3 a module to determine a bid increment.

1 40. A method of conducting a customer affinity program auction
2 comprising:

3 receiving a bid in cash from a customer for
4 merchandise being offered in the auction,
5 wherein at least a portion of the bid is paid for by
6 reward points converted to a cash value.

41. The method of claim 40, further comprising:

receiving registration information from the customer.

42. The method of claim 41, wherein the customer registration
information includes payment information.

43. The method of claim 40, further comprising:

providing a preview of the merchandise being offered
3 in the auction.

1 44. The method of claim 40, further comprising

2 authenticating the customer; and

3 allowing the customer to access a reward points
4 balance.

1 45. The method of claim 40 wherein the reward points are
2 converted to a cash value using an exchange rate.

1 46. A customer affinity program auction system, comprising:
2 a central controller constructed to receive a bid in
3 cash from a customer for merchandise being offered in the
4 auction,
5 wherein at least a portion of the bid is paid for by
6 reward points converted to a cash value.

47. The system of claim 46, further comprising:

the central controller is constructed to receive
registration information from the customer.

48. The system of claim 47, wherein the customer registration
information includes payment information.

49. The system of claim 46, further comprising:

the central controller is constructed to provide a
preview of the merchandise being offered in the auction.

50. The system of claim 46, further comprising

the central controller is constructed to authenticate
the customer and allow the customer to access a reward points
balance.

wherein at least a portion of the bid is paid for by
reward points converted to a cash value.

a module to receive registration information from the customer.

54. The computer executable code of claim 53, wherein the customer registration information includes payment information.

1 55. The computer executable code of claim 52, further
2 comprising:

3 a module to provide a preview of the merchandise being
4 offered in the auction.

1 56. The computer executable code of claim 52, further
2 comprising

3 a module to authenticate the customer; and
4 a module to allow the customer to access a reward
points balance.

57. The computer executable code of claim 52 wherein the module
converts reward points to a cash value using an exchange rate.